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AFGHAN FIRMS FRONTING FOR RED SPIES: SENATOR

By PETER MOSES
THE NEW York offices of three Afghan companies may be fronts for Soviet spies, a U.S. senator charges.

The U.S.-Afghan Trading Co., the Afghan Tourist Agency and Ariana, the national airline, all have been operating on behalf of the Soviet-supported regime in Afghanistan, says Sen. Gordon Humphrey (R-N.H.).

All were legitimate businesses before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

The trading firm is located at 122 W. 30th St. The other two are at 535 Fifth Av.

Humphrey, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee and chairman of a congressional task force on Afghanistan, says he believes the three businesses are operating illegally and should be kicked out of the country.

"These organizations obviously have no valid commercial reason for being in this country," he told The Post.

He said the State Dept. could do this simply by pulling the visas of the Afghan nationals still working there.

Since the Soviet invasion, flights on Ariana and the Soviet national airline, Aeroflot, have been barred.

Ariana has not flown from the U.S. since 1979, but its office still is open and it maintains a ticket agency in New York.

The Post has learned that the agency doesn't sell Ariana tickets, or those of any other airline.

"When was the last time any American took a tour of Kabul where a Soviet soldier will shoot anyone he sees?" asked Humphrey.

The trading company claims to provide letters of credit for American firms selling goods to Afghanistan and to Afghan firms selling to the U.S.

"Beyond that, we have no idea what they do," a Humphrey aide said.

"Why are they here. Are they a front for a Soviet spy ring?

"If they are functionalities of Afghanistan, they should be under the same constraints as Afghan embassy personnel," he said.

Humphrey said he had contacted the the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Commerce Dept., National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane and the State Dept.'s Foreign Missions Bureau.

Neither the State Dept. nor the Commerce Dept. would comment.